

## University of Cambridge

### Information Strategy and Services Syndicate

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 20 May 2010 in the Syndicate Room, the Old Schools.

Members present: Professor Littlewood (in the Chair), Dr Carpenter, Mr Matheson, Mr Mtimbiri, Mr Norman, Professor Oliver, Mr. Du Quesnay, Mr Richardson, Dr Robertson, Ms Tyson, Dr Walker, Dr Wallach and Mr. Warbrick, with: Professor Young (Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Planning and Resources), the Registry, University Librarian, Director of the Computing Service, Director of MISD and Mr Wilson (Secretary)

Apologies for absence were received from Professor Howe and Sir David Wallace.

There were no declarations of interest relating to matters on the agenda.

#### **161. Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the ISSS held on 21 January 2010 were approved.

#### **162. Matters arising and review of action points**

Action points arising from the last meeting and the annual cycle of business had been circulated as ISSS 190, and were agreed subject to the addition of the report on Identity Management (M 149) which would be received at the next meeting.

#### **163. March information note**

The note (ISSS 191) sent to all members on 31 March was received and endorsed. There were no matters arising.

#### **164. Business Committee minutes**

The minutes of the Business Committee meetings held on 8 and 23 March 2010 were received as ISSS 192 and 193.

#### **165. Review of Information Strategy**

The Chairman reported that after the meeting with the Pro-Vice-Chancellors on approaches to the development of the Information Strategy, the Registry had agreed to chair the working group on management systems; Sir David Wallace, the group looking at support for research and Rob Wallach the group on campus experience and outreach. The General Board's Teaching and Learning Working Group, chaired by Professor Rallison, would adopt the remit of what had originally been intended as the fourth group on teaching and learning.

The Chairman would now develop the remit of each group in consultation with the working group chairs, and appoint members in consultation with the Syndicate. He would welcome volunteers and suggestions for appointment. Membership was not restricted to Syndics but should include College representation where appropriate. He hoped that preliminary reports of the groups would be available for the first Syndicate meeting in the Michaelmas term. Chairs of working groups would be asked to make papers available to Syndics.

**Action: Chairman**

**166. Video Conferencing**

The Syndicate had agreed at their last meeting that Professor Howe, Dr Lewis, Mr Matheson and Dr Wallach should meet to consider the issues raised by the PRC's questions about videoconferencing, and report back in due course (M 153). The Syndicate received a report as ISSS 194.

The Syndicate endorsed the actions on the UCS, and in particular noted the advantages of a booking arrangement to encourage sharing of existing facilities. One professional studio was currently sufficient; there were a number of other rooms equipped for conferencing but growth was likely to be at the level of desk-top video. The UCS approach offered support and testing across the range. However, the carbon saving from videoconferencing would be very difficult, if not impossible, to measure and for some purposes face to face meetings would always be preferred.

No further meetings of the working party were needed at this stage, but the Syndicate asked for progress reports from the Director of UCS.

**Action: Director, UCS**

**167. Emergency Cover**

The Syndicate were reminded that they had considered at the January meeting the issue of 24 hour cover raised by the Board of Scrutiny (M 154), but not the second comment that "when there are problems on the computer network this now causes both telephones and computers to stop working, making it extremely difficult to report faults". The Board recommended multiple routes to report faults.

Syndics agreed that possession of mobile devices was now so general that a fault reporting procedure that depended on them was acceptable. (Special arrangements had been made in the telephone replacement project where that was not the case.) There should be an external number to which faults could be reported. That number might not be memorable or sufficiently well known but the instruction should be to contact Central Security whose number was widely available, and they would forward the call or issue the number. The instruction to contact Central Security in these circumstances could be posted on noticeboards, or stuck on every telephone.

**Action: Director, UCS**

**168. Research Grants Financial Management – Project X5**

The Research Grants Financial Management Project had been given the highest priority for funding from the Chest in 2010-11; a progress report (ISSS 195) was circulated and the Syndicate were asked to endorse for their part the proposed terms of reference for the Research Management Systems Committee (RMSC); the Research Policy Committee (RPC) had already considered and approved the proposal for their part.

The Syndicate were informed that the project remained on budget for 2010-11 but that they might in due course be requested to increase the funding for 2011-12. There were concerns about the joint committee being called the Project Board when that role – for Cambridge's part - was taken by the RMSC. The RMSC as the Project Board should be required to report to the Syndicate (as well as to the RPC); the joint committee would oversee the implementation team.

The Syndicate suggested that the functional specification be signed off by both the Director of the Research Office and by the PVC for Research. The RMSC in its role of oversight of research management systems generally should consider in detail the management information the systems should deliver to PIs and to central offices. If the cost were minimal, there might be an opportunity to develop the X5 project one stage further to deliver an fEC tool for non-research activity.

**Action: Director, MISD**

#### **169. Rules and Regulations**

The Syndicate noted the continuing review of rules and regulations and agreed that minor updating should continue to be made without reference but that more significant changes should be brought to them for approval. A note of progress was received as ISSS 196.

JANET guidance was awaited on the changes institutions are likely to have to make as a result of the Digital Economy Act and further work on the rules and regulations would wait for that guidance.

The Syndicate:

(1) Agreed to the proposal that the UCS should co-ordinate the redrafting of the policy for the *Acceptable Use of Computer Facilities, e-mail and the Internet* and incorporate this with the rest of the Syndicate's rules (<http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/hr/policy/computer.html>).

(2) Approved the *Web Accessibility Guidelines* circulated as ISSS 197, noting that they would need review and possible updating at least annually to ensure they continued to represent Sector good practice.

#### **170. Annual Report and review of ISSS**

Syndics were reminded that the annual cycle of business required at this time of the year an invitation to Syndics (a) to comment on the operation of the Syndicate and (b) to suggest matters to be covered in the annual report. Syndics were therefore invited to submit any comments or suggestions to the Chairman or Secretary as soon as possible.

#### **171. Matlab**

Paper ISSS 198 proposed the purchase of MatLab licences with the cost being shared between Schools. The proposal had been considered by the Resource Management Committee on 12 May and referred to the ISSS. Heads of Schools had agreed that there should be further discussion with the Finance Managers and UCS, informed by more robust estimates of cost and contributions.

A number of members emphasised the value of MatLab, favoured the proposed solution and noted the urgency of a decision being reached in time for the next academical year. Other members noted that MatLab was not the only solution and there would be significant cost implications for some departments over the current arrangements which suited them well. (It was emphasised that although Schools could recharge departments, the cost could never be passed on to students.)

There was general support for a distinction between software in support of teaching and in support of research. There were free alternatives such as Octave which some departments found provided all the functionality needed for undergraduate teaching with the additional benefit of low management costs. The Syndicate noted that the movement of students between departments made it desirable for the University to adopt a single solution so that all students had access to the same software. Common basic provision would not prevent departments adding to it.

The Chairman agreed to write to Dr Padman suggesting further discussions with departments on the lines set out above.

**Action: Chairman**

**172. Information Strategy Working Group**

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 April were circulated as ISSS 199.

Syndics agreed that the ISWG should receive a report on each project when TDF funding ceased. These could be subsumed within a single annual report on the TDF to be forwarded to the Syndicate by the ISWG in each planning round.

**Action: Secretary, ISWG**

**173. Technology Development Fund**

A note of the TDF and current commitments was circulated as ISSS 200. The Committee noted that the RMC had reduced the topslice for MISD (used to fund UAS IS developments) in proportion to the reduction in the TDF as a whole. The Syndicate agreed that it would be more appropriate in the next planning round to separate the two sums.

**174. Joint Network Management Committee**

The draft minutes of the JNMC's meeting on 3 March 2010 were received as ISSS 201; the Chair of the JNMC reported that the minutes had subsequently been amended at M 14(d) and a final version would be published on the web.

**175. Service reports**

Service reports on the UCS and MISD were circulated as ISSS 202 and 203 respectively.

**176. Meeting dates**

Syndics were invited to note the schedules of meetings for the remainder of 2009- 2010 and for 2010-11, but that the dates were liable to change:

BC	Friday 11 June 2010	2.00pm	Treasurer's Room
BC	Monday 28 June 2010	11.00am	Møller Centre
ISSS	<b>Friday 2 July 2010</b>	2.15 pm	Syndicate Room
BC	Tuesday 13 July 2010	2.00pm	Treasurer's Room

BC	Monday 4 October 2010	11.00am	Treasurer's Room
ISSS	<b>Tuesday 12 October 2010</b>	2.15pm	Syndicate Room
BC	Monday 1 November 2010	11.00am	Treasurer's Room
ISSS	Thursday 18 November 2010	2.15pm	Syndicate Room
BC	<b>Tuesday 14 December 2010</b>	2.15pm	Treasurer's Room
ISSS	Thursday 20 January 2011	2.15pm	Syndicate Room
BC	Monday 21 February 2011	11.00am	Treasurer's Room
ISSS	Thursday 17 March 2011	2.15pm	Syndicate Room
BC	Monday 18 April 2011	11.00am	Treasurer's Room

ISSS	Thursday 19 May 2011	2.15pm	Syndicate Room
BC	Monday 13 June 2011	11.00am	Treasurer's Room
ISSS	Thursday 7 July 2011	2.15pm	Syndicate Room

This list may change and the latest version should be referred to. Changes since the dates were first agreed are **bold**.

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PRAO,  
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